

The Southern Plains Network (SOPN) is currently in Phase 1 (described on Monitoring page) of developing the Vital Signs Monitoring Program. During Phase 1, SOPN staff will be conducting scoping sessions in two distinct parts.

Part 1 will consist of SOPN staff making individual visits to each park. SOPN will interview park superintendents, resource managers, and other relevant park personnel to explain the Inventory and Monitoring process. The interviews will allow SOPN to hear directly from Park employees what are their major natural resources, major threats to park resources, monitoring being done in and around park, and their suggestions for the science advisory committee. SOPN staff will also tour the park and obtain additional relevant documents and spatial information. These visits will be crucial to let park staff know that this is their monitoring program and will be designed for the individual parks and the network as a whole. After completing the visits, SOPN will compile the interview information and conduct a survey of park staff to identify the most significant resources and stressors for the SOPN as a whole and for individual parks.

Part 2 will take place in 2005, and will consist of 2-3 scoping meetings that will last 2-3 days each that will be based by major ecosystem type (short-grass prairie, riverine). All parks with that ecosystem type will be invited to these meetings, as well as subject-matter experts. Objectives at Part 2 will be to review draft conceptual models, and review the prioritized list of significant natural resources and stressors that were identified by parks during the survey, and then develop a list of Vital Signs that address each resource and stressor. These workshops will be critical to have outside review of the work done to date, and to properly identify potential Vital Signs.